

The Peace Fire

Welcome back. This is the second session in our discussion about responding to conflict in a way that glorifies Jesus Christ. In the last session, we introduced you to the wild fire. The wild fire is the fire that destroys and it represents conflict. Sometimes, a wild fire ignites spontaneously. Sometimes it's nothing more than glowing embers. Sometimes it's a raging inferno. A wild fire represents all of the dynamics that exist in a conflict: the people, the circumstances, the physical assets that maybe at issue in a particular conflict.

Today, we're going to introduce you to the second fire that can burn during a conflict. We call it the peace fire. It's the fire that transforms. The peace fire represents the fire of the Holy Spirit and the peace that is found in Jesus Christ. Whereas a conflict wild fire can ignite either unintentionally and sometimes intentionally, a peace fire never ignites without intention. It must be lit intentionally. It is impossible to light a peace fire without the presence of Jesus Christ.

In Luke 24, two disciples are on a road to Emmaus shortly after Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The Lord joined them in their journey but they did not immediately recognize him. The Lord asked the disciples what they were talking about and they asked him if he hadn't heard about all the things that had happened in Jerusalem. Jesus said, "What things?" The disciples recounted to him about Jesus' betrayal and crucifixion and reported resurrection. After they finished explaining what happened at Jerusalem, Jesus said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"

Jesus proceeded to give them a Bible study from the Old Testament about the prophecies concerning himself. When they arrived at their destination, Jesus acted as if he would travel on. But the disciples invited him to stay with them and have dinner. As they began to eat, Jesus gave thanks and broke the bread and the disciples recognized Jesus. And then he disappeared. After Jesus disappeared, the disciples said something to one another that captures for us the essence of the peace fire. In Luke 24:32, it reads, "They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?'"

Jesus Christ is the peace fire. As the living and written Word of God, He brings a fire and a peace that passes understanding. Let's look at a few of the scriptures that reference this fire and this peace. Jeremiah 20:9, it says, "If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my

heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.” Jeremiah 23:29, “Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD.” John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” Jeremiah 29:11, “‘For I know the thoughts that I think towards you,’ says the Lord, ‘Thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end.’”

The Lord provides three things at the peace fire that protect us in the conflict wild fire: His presence, His purpose, and His power. In this session, we will briefly consider these three aspects of God’s peace. If you would like to study this topic further, you are welcome to enroll in the Two Fires course as I mentioned to you in the previous session at our web site at www.peacefire.net. In that course, we explore in-depth each of these areas that I’m going to summarize in a brief format in this course.

The scripture theme for the Two Fires of Conflict course is Isaiah 26:3, 4. This passage highlights the three aspects of God’s perfect peace that are available to followers of Jesus Christ. That passage reads, “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.”

Reviewing this passage in a little more detail. “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you” referencing God’s presence that our thoughts are stayed on Him because we trust in Him, His purpose, His purpose in the midst of a conflict, His presence in the midst of a conflict. We will trust in the Lord forever because He is an everlasting rock, referencing His power, His power to enable us to walk through conflict in a manner that pleases Him and accomplishes His purpose in good pleasure.

It is important to seek God’s presence in the midst of conflict because God’s presence changes your perspective on the conflict. In Joshua 5, the nation of Israel has just crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Jericho lies before them and Joshua has an encounter with the commander of the army of the Lord, a pre-incarnation appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joshua 5, 13:14 read as follows, “When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, ‘Are you for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, ‘No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.’ And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, ‘What does my lord say to his servant?’

We would think that when Joshua asked the Lord, “Are you for us or for our enemies,” that the Lord would respond by saying, “I’ve come to help you, Joshua. I’m on your side.” But it’s not what he

said. He said, “No, but I’m commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.” In conflict, Jesus Christ doesn’t come to take sides. As the late Major Ian Thomas said, “Jesus Christ doesn’t come to take sides. He comes to take over.”

When you are in conflict or someone comes to you who is in conflict, what do you encourage them to look at and what do you yourself look at? What do you give your attention to? The wild fire? Other people? Yourself? What do you look at? What you give your attention to will influence your perspective on the conflict. Your perspective on a conflict does not have to be controlled by what is happening in the wild fire. In the wild fire, your perspective will be shaped by the circumstances and the emotional and spiritual dynamics of the conflict, the pride, anger, fear, hatred, envy, strife, and an almost endless list of forces and temptations that can be present in conflict.

Seeking God’s presence during a conflict wild fire will change your perspective on that conflict. When you seek God’s presence and your perspective is shaped by your relationship with Jesus Christ, the Lord can begin to reveal His purpose to you as you seek Him in His Word and in prayer. Like God’s presence, it is also important to understand God’s purpose in the midst of conflict because understanding God’s purpose changes your priorities.

When you seek God in order to understand His purpose in the midst of conflict, He will change your priorities and enable you to pursue His purpose rather than your own or someone else’s. God promises to provide for His people even in the midst of conflict, if we seek His priorities first. Matthews 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

The Lord cautions us that our thoughts are not the same as His thoughts. We should not automatically assume that our desired outcome in a conflict is consistent with the Lord’s desired outcome. God promises to send or reveal His Word to us when we seek Him. In my years as an attorney, Christian clients have often come to me with a list of Bible verses that they are praying over and confessing and claiming for the Lord to accomplish and honor in the midst of a conflict.

Without fail, that list of verses always supports that person’s position and desired outcome. I’ve not yet had a client who has brought in any Bible verses that they’re standing on, bring verses in that indicate that they want to bless their enemy, that they want to have the Lord have His way even if it might not be their desired outcome. Let’s look at what the Word of God says about the Lord’s thoughts not being our thoughts and that He desires to reveal His Word to us if we seek Him at the peace fire.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.’” Isaiah 55:8-11.

In Jeremiah 29:13, “You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.” In Psalms 19:13, “Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.” Seeking God at the peace fire protects you from presuming that you know God’s purpose. The Lord can use your past knowledge and experience, but they are not intended to replace the Holy Spirit’s guidance that occurs when you take the time to seek Him moment by moment.

When the Lord reveals His purpose to you, it changes your priorities when responding to a conflict wild fire. By aligning your priorities with God’s purpose, the Lord can use conflict to bring growth and transformation rather than let the peace fire cause damage and destruction. After God’s presence changes your perspective and God’s purpose has aligned your priorities, you are ready to receive God’s power. God’s power is essential in order to respond to conflict in a manner that glorifies Jesus Christ because God’s power changes your possibilities.

Seeking God at the peace fire gives you power to resolve a conflict in a way that pleases God. In your own strength, you might be able to tame a wild fire, but not in a way that glorifies Him. In John 15:5, Jesus Christ tells us how important it is to rely on His power rather than our own. He said, “I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing.”

With God’s power present and available to you, nothing is impossible. Whatever He asks you to do, He will provide the resources and power to accomplish it. By seeking God’s power to resolve your conflicts, real and lasting change can occur in your relationships. Luke 1:37 says, “For nothing will be impossible with God.” Mark 10:27, “Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man, it is impossible but not with God, for all things are possible with God.’”

The peace fire is not a formula, an academic pursuit or a set of principles that if applied correctly will yield a guaranteed result. The peace fire is a person. Jesus Christ is the peace fire. Resolving conflict at the peace fire means seeking the Lord’s presence to understand His purpose and to receive His power

to respond to the conflict in a manner that glorifies Him. Romans 5:1 reads, “Therefore since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus said in John 16:33, “I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.”

Let’s review the key points from this session. A peace fire must be lit intentionally. It is there you seek God’s presence, His purpose, and His power. His presence changes your perspective on the conflict. His purpose changes your priorities in the conflict. His power changes your possibilities. Jesus Christ is the peace fire. In Him, you find peace and through Him you find the power to overcome in the midst of conflict.

In the next session, I’ll challenge you with the choice that exists in every conflict. This choice can determine whether a conflict wild fire will cause devastation or result in transformation.